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Atari Online News, Etc.
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-* Lojack for Laptops Lawsuit! *-
-* Chinese General's Spy Talk Leaked! *-
-* LulzSec and Anonymous Suspects Busted in UK *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard

"Saying it like it is!"

"-----"

Well, at least in my immediate area along the northeastern corner of Massachusetts, we dodged a big bullet last weekend as far as Hurricane Irene goes, or went! The storm's path was west of us, and we were hit with glancing blows of rain and winds. The worst was that some parts of town had power losses, but we were fine. We were lucky while other parts of the state, and country, didn't fare too well.

There's not a whole lot to say about it; there's really not much that one can do about being in a hurricane. You can prepare, you can hunker down, and you can hope. Preparation helps should you be affected, but one is essentially at the mercy of the storm.

So, while our neighbors are doing what they can to recover, let's do our part to move forward as best as we can, and enjoy this week's issue!

Until next time...

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - Call of Duty XP Begins!
"-----" Possible Cyborg Tech!
Nintendo 3DS Free Games Offer!
And more!

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!

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Call of Duty XP Begins, CoD Elite Premium Unveiled

Call of Duty is a phenomenon. The last few titles have all made over a billion dollars, and the series has opened the world of online multiplayer

competition to millions of people worldwide. If you personally don't play Call of Duty, you almost certainly know someone who does. So when Activision announced that it would be hosting an event to celebrate the franchise, the gaming world paid attention.

Call of Duty XP begins today in Los Angeles, in a massive warehouse connected to a plot of land. The area contains a recreation of the level "Scrapyard" from Modern Warfare 2 that people can play paintball in, zip lines that travel 60 mph, a recreation of The Pit from Modern Warfare 2 and even a facsimile of "Burgertown" where you can grab lunch.

But more importantly to gamers, the event will give several thousand fans the opportunity to play the new Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3's competitive multiplayer, co-operative Spec Ops mode and see Call of Duty Elite's premium offerings. Last night, the press was given the chance to check out the games, as well as hear a few details about the future of the franchise.

The multiplayer debut showed off a few new tricks, including several changes to the way you progress your weapons, and how you utilize kill streaks. Check out our hands-on previews for more details on the multiplayer. But when it came to the press conference, the real show stealer was Elite.

Earlier this year, Activision announced Call of Duty Elite, a subscription-based plan that immediately had people screaming that Activision was moving towards a pay-to-play model. From what we saw at E3, the service appeared to be primarily a stat tracking tool that connected your Call of Duty games online, offered a few ways to connect to other gamers and gave a few new ways to track the way you played in the free version of Elite. More was promised in the premium version, but Activision wasn't prepared to go into details at the time. They are now.

The Call of Duty Elite premium program will cost \$49.99 per year, and if you are a fan of the series, and someone that buys the map packs, then the service will pay for itself and even offer a discount.

When you become a premium member you will still have all the stat tracking that a free member has, but you will also receive several benefits. Not only will you receive the map packs as part of the cost, you will receive the maps - and all downloadable content - earlier than anyone else, and Activision is promising new content each month for premium members. Although it isn't entirely clear what that monthly content will consist of, it could very well be a new multiplayer or Spec Ops map that the premium members will have long before those who plan to purchase the map packs individually.

But the real goal of Elite is to connect the Call of Duty community. To that end, both the free and premium services will offer ways for users to create and join groups. These groups will be user-created, and could be anything from fans of a certain sports team, to people that live in the same area. Users can join as many groups as they like to connect with people. There will also be clan-specific sections of Elite, where clan battles can be arranged. Elite will also connect directly with Facebook, and show you who among your friends plays Call of Duty. You will be able to message and send game requests from Elite to gamers through Facebook, offering more ways to connect.

Elite will also allow users to share their custom-created games. Modern Warfare 3 will have wildly customizable options, and those can be uploaded to Elite for all to download.

Of all the upcoming features of Elite, the most intriguing may be the video

options. Whether a member is on the free or premium service, you will be able to share your best videos from the game, captured in the theater mode, and premium members will have 8 times more video storage capacity. But one of the more ambitious features of the Elite Premium will be the professionally created content.

Activision has enlisted several Hollywood powerhouses to come and create content for the Elite service. Justin Bateman and Will Arnet's production company will be among the first, and they are working on a new online program called "Noob Tube," which will take some of the more memorable videos captured from the games, and comment on them a la Mystery Science Theater 3000 and Tosh.0. Ridley and Tony Scott are also onboard and are currently working on something for Elite as well. It isn't known what the directorial brothers have planned, other than that it will be episodic content celebrating Call of Duty. Expect announcements on more well-known celebrities getting involved with Elite in the coming weeks.

Another video service on the way will be the Friday Night Fights. This will pit certain groups against each other, including possibly rival athletes, facing off in the game. More details on this will be announced in the next few months as well.

There will also be a huge emphasis on contests, where you can win both virtual and physical prizes. Contests will be offered for all levels of player, regardless of skill level. The Elite beta is already working on this, and recently there were a handful of video-specific contests, including one where you were encouraged to set the best trap in Black Ops, then take the video and upload it for judgment. The entries were incredibly creative, and the winner received a 46" LCD TV. Expect more of that with Elite, especially on the Premium side. Those in the free version will still have plenty of chances to win prizes, but premium members will have the chance to win things like cars and vacations.

And there is still plenty more to come with Elite. It will be a work in progress, partly determined by the community that uses it. One thing is certain though, if you are a fan of Call of Duty, it is definitely worth the price. Although it wasn't confirmed, it was strongly hinted that there will be (at least) four map packs for Modern Warfare 3, which purchased individually would cost \$60. For that reason alone, it makes sense financially.

A one-year membership for the Elite premium package will also be included with the Call of Duty: Modern Warfare 3 Hardened Edition, or you can purchase the membership separately when it is released with Modern Warfare 3 in November.

New Video Game Shows Glimpse of Possible Cyborg Tech

The hot new video game "Deus Ex: Human Revolution," which hit shelves last week, allows players set in the future to replace entire organs and limbs with ones that are stronger and faster than the average person. But according to the game's creators, this concept may not be as far off from reality as you'd think.

"Deus Ex: Human Revolution" - which made news when video game retailer GameStop yanked coupons placed inside the game's packaging for free access to the streaming service Onlive, a competitor to the retailer's upcoming

streaming service - focuses on human augmentation, or the addition of mechanical parts to the human body. In the game, having a player's leg replaced with a mechanically augmented leg isn't a handicap - it's an advantage.

The storyline is based on the assumption that mechanical augmentations continue to be developed and improved at an exponential rate. These augmentations are incredibly useful, but as with any implant, the body's natural response to foreign objects is to attack them with the immune system. In "Deus Ex: Human Revolution," a drug called Neuropozyne - informally called Nu-poz - is an anti-rejection drug used by augmented humans to stop the buildup of scar tissue around augmentations.

This enables everyone to have long-term implants, but at a cost of becoming addicted to the expensive drug. The story starts with a scientist's revelation that she found a way to do genetic engineering to avoid the need for the drug, but she is murdered in the first scene.

The game also features superhuman sensor technology, allowing your character to narrow in on bad guys as they approach, and also obtain noticeable gains in body function and strength. "Deus Ex" also includes various militarized augmentations, such as a prosthetic arm that can turn into a gun.

You are able to build your character's augmentations to support your abilities to be a social manipulator, a hacker, a stealthy or a physically powerfully player. The choices you make throughout the game affect the plot.

Game maker Square Enix was committed to making sure the technology used in the game was as accurate as possible, so they turned to Will Rosellini - a former professional baseball pitcher in the Arizona Diamondbacks system and CEO of MicroTransponder, a company working on implants that can actually control nerve impulses in the human body - to consult on the game.

"When I retired, I realized I had spent 15 years thinking about how best to prepare my body and mind to deliver a pitch at over 95mph," Rosellini told TechNewsDaily. "When I saw how researchers were working on these problems for patients with faulty nervous systems, I decided I could apply my interest to helping people get better. I also wished it was possible to replace it with a superhuman one that could throw balls faster than before."

Rosellini became fascinated with electronic devices that could be integrated into and help repair damaged nervous systems. Although some of the technology in the game is far from reality right now, the concept of body augmentation is only expected to grow, Rosellini said.

"People have been augmenting themselves since the beginning of time, with tools, weapons and now cosmetic implants," he added. "Meanwhile, there is a growing dependency on chemical augmentations for mood enhancements (Paxil) or cognitive enhancements for children (Adderall). The question isn't whether humans should augment themselves or not, the question is whether augmentation leads them to a happy more fulfilled life."

Rosellini said he views the integration of technology into the human body as a mixed blessing.

"The major pros involve medical devices that can be used to treat neurological diseases by improving function and a return to daily life," Rosellini said. "However, the primary con relates to needing to have a surgery and the infection risk."

Augmentations that heighten your senses or boost your strength are probably closer to reality than enhancements that make you smarter or improve your memory, Rosellini said, but the latter transplants are not impossible.

Experiments in rats, for example, suggest it may be possible to enhance cognitive functions by inserting a chip into the hippocampus - the part of the brain that retains memories - to replace and delete memories.

"The cognitive enhancements would be the furthest out in becoming a reality," Rosellini said.

Nintendo 3DS Rolls Out Free Games Offer

Ten free NES games now await Nintendo 3DS owners who bought and registered the handheld prior to August 12.

Best-known among them are the classics Super Mario Bros, The Legend of Zelda I and II, Metroid, and Donkey Kong Jr.

Yoshi (aka Mario & Yoshi), Balloon Fight, Wrecking Crew, Ice Climber and Mario Open Golf (aka Open Tournament Golf) complete the line-up.

The games can be downloaded to each qualifying 3DS by accessing the eShop via WiFi connection, and navigating first to the Settings / Other menu, then the Your Downloads list, and finally tapping Redownload.

All ten are expected to make their way onto the eShop as purchasable items, with various enhancements included and deployed to existing copies at no extra charge.

Nintendo announced the 3DS Ambassador Program in conjunction with a deep price cut that shaved off \$80, ¥10,000 and around 50/£50 for those that plumped for the 3DS after that August 12 deadline.

Official support site: nintendo.com/consumer/systems/3ds/en_na/3dsambassador.jspfreegames

Video Game Console Case Offers Gaming on the Go

Console gaming on the go just got easier thanks to a mobile gaming kit that comes with a built-in high-definition display screen to connect to your Xbox 360 or Sony PlayStation system.

The GAEMS G155, short for Gaming and Entertainment Mobile Systems, is essentially a heavy-duty briefcase with the display neatly fixed to the inner lid. Your game console is positioned inside and held in place tightly by two wide fabric fasteners straps.

A short HDMI cable comes with the unit and connects your game console to a port near the bottom of the display. Two pouches are available for power cords and a controller or two.

That's pretty much the simple science behind this \$299 unit. Once you've

put your console in, you can play "Call of Duty: Black Ops" to your heart's content anywhere there's a power outlet.

The system supports recent models of Microsoft Corp.'s Xbox 360 and Sony Corp.'s PlayStation 3. You'd have to buy those separately. (Nintendo Co.'s Wii isn't supported because it doesn't have an HDMI jack.)

The build quality of the unit is fine. The console sits on a padded base that helps prevent it from slipping around in the case. I noticed no shifting as I carried my PlayStation 3 from room to room and to the office.

The 15.5-inch LED HD display delivered crisp colors and sharp detail during my tests playing a FIFA soccer game and a few shooters titles. High-definition videos I had saved on the PS3 hard drive also looked fine.

The volume, brightness and menu buttons at the bottom of the display glow red and offer easy access and usability. That said, I think the unit would be better if it shipped with an optional wireless remote, instead of selling that piece separately for \$20.

There are twin audio jacks on the bottom of the display, which is a nice touch if you're gaming against someone next to you.

What might you need the GAEMS G155 for?

If you're traveling on business and are passionate about your games, you could use it to continue your campaigns from the comfort of a hotel room in the evenings. You could also bring it home for the holidays and pull it out after you've eaten enough turkey and endured enough family banter for the evening.

The GAEMS 155 is one of those products you probably think you don't need until you see how convenient it is. For some, surely this is overkill. For avid gamers, however, this is a pretty sweet addition for the road.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Chinese General's Spy Talk Leaked onto YouTube

Footage of a Chinese general discussing sensitive spying cases has been leaked onto Google Inc.'s video sharing site YouTube, in what appears to be an embarrassing failure of secrecy for the usually tightlipped military.

It wasn't clear when or where Maj. Gen. Jin Yinan made the comments and China's Defense Ministry did not immediately respond Monday to faxed questions about the video. Calls to the National Defense University where Jin is a lecturer rang unanswered.

While some of the cases had been announced before, few details had been

released, while others involving the military had been entirely secret.

Among those Jin discussed was that of former Ambassador to South Korea Li Bin, who was sentenced to seven years for corruption. Jin said Li had actually been discovered passing secrets to South Korea that compromised China's position in North Korean nuclear disarmament talks, but the allegations were too embarrassing to make public and graft charges were brought instead.

"In all the world, what nation's ambassador serves as another country's spy?" Jin said.

Similar treatment was handed out to the former head of China's nuclear power program, Kang Rixin, who was sentenced to life in prison last November on charges of corruption. Jin said Kang had in fact peddled secrets about China's civilian nuclear program to a foreign nation that he did not identify, but that was considered too sensitive to bring up in court.

Kang, a member of the ruling Communist Party's powerful Central Committee as well as its disciplinary arm, was one of the highest-ranking officials ever to be involved in spying, Jin said. His arrest dealt a major shock to the party leadership, Jin said.

"The party center was extremely nervous. They ordered top-to-bottom inspections and spared no individual," he said.

Jin also talked about Tong Daning, an official from China's social security fund, who was executed in 2006 after being convicted on charges of spying for rival Taiwan. Jin said Tong had passed information to the island's leaders about China's currency regime, allowing them to avoid massive losses due to exchange rate changes.

Among the cases involving military personnel, Jin said that of Col. Xu Junping, who defected to the United States in 2000, did not involve the loss of any technical secrets.

Instead, Xu relayed to the Americans his knowledge of the military leaderships' personalities, attitudes and habits gleaned from many years accompanying the top brass on trips abroad, Jin said.

The video was also posted on Chinese websites, and while it was removed from most locations, screen shots, audio files and transcripts of Jin's comments could still be found on sites such as Sina Weibo's popular microblogging service.

Jin's presentation, complete with explanatory slides, was typical of how such cases are discussed at private sessions as a warning to Communist Party cadres not to be lured into espionage or corruption. The leaked video appeared to have been from an official recording rather than filmed by a member of the audience.

Authorities heavily police the Chinese Internet but can only remove objectionable content after it is posted and have no control over what appears elsewhere.

While Chinese are enthusiastic users of social media, YouTube and Facebook are blocked inside China and their Chinese equivalents are required to inspect all content and remove politically sensitive material before being ordered to do so.

LulzSec and Anonymous Suspects Arrested In U.K.

British police have arrested two men accused of conspiring to commit computer crimes under cover of the online identity Kayla associated with the hacktivist groups Anonymous and LulzSec. Computer equipment belonging to one of the accused men was seized for forensic examination.

Among other things, Kayla has been linked to the security breaches that occurred at HBGary Federal last February in the wake of the security firm's boast that it was about to reveal the true identities of some members of Anonymous and LulzSec.

"The arrests relate to our enquiries into a series of serious computer intrusions and online denial-of-service attacks recently suffered by a number of multinational companies, public institutions, and government and law-enforcement agencies in Great Britain and the United States," said Mark Raymond, a detective inspector with the e-crime unit of the Metropolitan Police Service.

Thursday's arrests are part of an ongoing investigation by the e-crimes unit in collaboration with the FBI and other law-enforcement agencies overseas. "We are working to detect and bring before the courts those responsible for these offenses, to disrupt such groups, and to deter others thinking of participating in this type of criminal activity," Raymond said.

The latest round of U.K. arrests demonstrates that hacktivists aren't as anonymous as they would like to believe. In an interview published earlier this week as part of a Cisco Systems security blog, a former Anonymous member known by the online identity Sparkyblaze advised other hackers to stay away from black-hat hacking.

"White-hat hacking is a lot more fun, you get paid for it, it is legal," Sparkyblaze observed. "A conviction for hacking and leaking a database will affect you for the rest of your life."

The former hacktivist said he was initially attracted to Anonymous because he loves hacking and believes in free speech. However, he eventually became disillusioned with some of the group's activities.

"I feel that it is OK if you are attacking the governments [for the purpose of] getting files and giving them to WikiLeaks, that sort of thing," the former member noted. "But putting usernames and passwords on a pastebin doesn't [impact governments], and posting the info of the people you fight for is just wrong."

The biggest problem companies face today is a lack of understanding concerning the importance of computer security [and having] a good information security policy, Sparkyblaze noted.

Companies don't want to spend time and money on computer security because they don't think it matters, Sparkyblaze observed. "They don't encrypt the data, nor do they get the right software, hardware and people required to stay secure," he explained. "[And] they don't train their staff not to open attachments from people they don't know."

Earlier this week, British police arrested three men between the ages of 20

and 26 and two teenagers for conspiring to commit unlawful computer acts. Four of the defendants are scheduled to be arraigned in the City of Westminster Magistrates' Court on Sept. 7. Additionally, a 16-year-old male has been referred to the Surrey Youth Justice Board.

Judge Greenlights Privacy Suit Against LoJack for Laptops

Internet communications and location services can be useful for tracking down lost or stolen devices - but all that tracking can have unintended consequences. A judge has ruled that a couple can sue Absolute Software - developers of the theft-recovery system LoJack for Laptops - after the company intercepted sexually explicit messages and images sent between the couple and shared them with police.

The story is a little convoluted. According to court documents, a laptop computer owned by a Springfield, Ohio, school district was lent to a vocational school student; while at the public library, the laptop was stolen and the theft reported to police. Some time later, another student at an alternative school purchased the laptop - which had had part of its serial number scratched off - for \$40, and brought it to one of the plaintiffs, offering to sell it to her for \$60. (The student claimed it belonged to his aunt and uncle, and that he had permission to sell it.) The plaintiff agreed on the condition the laptop could get up and running again; a third party re-installed an operating system and software, and the plaintiff took possession of the laptop.

However, the computer still had Absolute Software's LoJack for Laptops installed, and the company had been logging the system's IP address whenever it popped up on the Internet. After the plaintiff took possession of the laptop, Absolute Software began intercepting communications on the system, which included sexually explicit messages and webcam images with the second plaintiff, an old high school sweetheart with whom the first plaintiff (a 52-year-old widow who works as a substitute teacher) had restarted a long-distance relationship. Absolute Software shared the intercepted communications with the police, who then went to the plaintiff's house, confronted her with the materials, and placed her under arrest for receiving stolen property. Those charges were dropped a week later.

The lawsuit against Absolute Software - as well as the Springfield, Ohio, police department - alleges that the interception of the private communications violates the Electronic Communications Privacy Act and federal wiretapping laws. The defendants argued that the plaintiffs had no such rights since the notebook was stolen, but federal judge Herbert Rice has ruled that the case can go to trial, finding that a reasonable jury might find that the conduct of Absolute Software and the police department crossed an "impermissible boundary."

If the case goes to trial - and that's anybody's guess, at this point - it may set an important precedent regarding what data can be legitimately collected by device recovery services.

Hewlett-Packard said Tuesday it plans one last production run of the TouchPad, which has become a hot seller following a price cut and the announcement the company was killing the tablet computer.

Citing disappointing sales, HP, the world's largest personal computer maker, announced on August 18 that it was ending production of the TouchPad, its rival to Apple's iPad, after just seven weeks on the market.

HP also said it was halting production of phones based on the webOS mobile operating system acquired from Palm last year for \$1.2 billion.

The Palo Alto, California-based HP also announced that it was cutting the price of the most basic model of the TouchPad from \$399 to just \$99.

The tablet computer has been flying off the shelves ever since.

"Since we announced the price drop, the number of inquiries about the product and the speed at which it disappeared from inventory has been stunning," HP said in a blog post on Tuesday.

"Despite announcing an end to manufacturing webOS hardware, we have decided to produce one last run of TouchPads to meet unfulfilled demand," HP said.

"We don't know exactly when these units will be available or how many we'll get, and we can't promise we'll have enough for everyone," HP said. "We do know that it will be at least a few weeks before you can purchase."

HP also announced on August 18 that it was exploring a spinoff of its PC unit in a historic shift away from the consumer market.

RIM Drops PlayBook Tablet Prices at Best Buy Stores

Those sounds you hear are more tablet prices dropping. Research In Motion is the latest dropper, via a Best Buy limited sale offering a \$50 discount on RIM's 16GB BlackBerry PlayBook, down from \$499.99.

The retailer is also discounting the 32GB PlayBook by \$50 to \$549.99, and slashing the 64GB PlayBook by \$150, also to \$549.99. Best Buy hasn't indicated the length of the sale, or why a customer would buy the 32GB for \$549.99 when they can get the 64GB at the same price.

The Best Buy discount for RIM's tablets may help move those models this Labor Day weekend, but it's unlikely to cause the recent stampede that Best Buy experienced for Hewlett-Packard's discounted, discontinued TouchPad.

After HP announced last month that it would no longer make the tablet or continue development on its webOS operating system, the \$499 16GB model dropped to \$99, and the \$599 32GB model to \$149. Only a few days before the HP announcement and price drop, Best Buy reportedly asked the computer maker to take back hundreds of thousands of unsold units. After the price drop, the TouchPad sold out within a few days.

Rather than getting ready to dump its tablet, a la HP, RIM may be clearing out inventory in preparation for a new model with a new version of its PlayBook OS containing an Android app player, among other new features. Such rumors are floating around the web.

But the Best Buy discounts may only be the beginning of the pricing story for PlayBooks. There are reports that Staples has sent out emails from internal sales reps to regular customers, offering PlayBooks at 50 percent off, only on Sept. 7 and 8 and only "while supplies last."

RIM said in June that it had shipped 550,000 PlayBooks, although it's not clear how many of those were actually sold through to customers. RIM is looking to move as many of the PlayBooks as possible to stave off more talk about its financial problems when it gives an earnings report in the middle of this month.

In the last year, the company's stock has dropped more than 50 percent. In July, RIM announced it was cutting its workforce about 10 percent. Along with the layoffs, the Waterloo, Ontario-based company changed its senior management team, with a new COO for product and sales, a new managing director for global sales and regional marketing, and a new COO for operations.

Even as RIM fiddles with its pricing, a wave of \$200 to \$300 tablets are expected to hit the market. Lenovo's new IdeaPad Tablet A1 starts at \$199, Samsung's original Galaxy Tab is now \$279, Barnes & Noble's seven-inch nook color e-book reader and pseudo-tablet is \$249, and Amazon.com is expected to release one or two models in this price range before the end of the year.

Chrome Celebrates Its Third Birthday

For the last three years Google's Chrome team has been working hard to make browsers faster, smarter and less complicated.

"In that time, the web community has continued to inspire us," says Google, "bringing the power of the web into all kinds of apps and experiences, with all modern browsers making great strides in speed, simplicity and security. To pay homage to the goodness of the web, we've put together an interactive infographic, built in HTML5, which details the evolution of major web technologies and browsers."

Celebrate Chrome's third birthday and see how the web and browsers such as Mosaic, Netscape, Opera, Internet Explorer, Safari, Firefox and Chrome have evolved from the humble beginnings of HTTP and HTML 1.0 in the early 1990s into the modern web browsers we use today by visiting The Evolution of the Web at <http://evolutionofweb.appspot.com/>.

Time Magazine, 1985

TIME's Barbara Rudolph, in "Shaken to the Very Core," September 30th 1985, which calls Jobs "brash," "brilliant," and "petulant," among other things: Silicon Valley remains rife with speculation about how well Apple will function without Jobs. Sculley is confident: "Steve's great contribution was recognizing that computers were tools for individuals and not large blue boxes for institutions. That doesn't change, whether Steve is here or not."

Some observers, noting that Apple stock jumped \$1 a share after Jobs resignation became known, believe his departure may be a blessing for the

company. Says David Gold, a Palo Alto venture capitalist: "It's good news for Apple that he's out of their hair. The loss of a few employees is probably a small price to pay to have Steve Jobs going off and doing something else." But Nolan Bushnell, who founded Atari and subsequently launched and left several other firms, including Pizza Time Theater, is not so sure. Says he: "Where is Apple's inspiration going to come from? Is Apple going to have all the romance of a new brand of Pepsi?"

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